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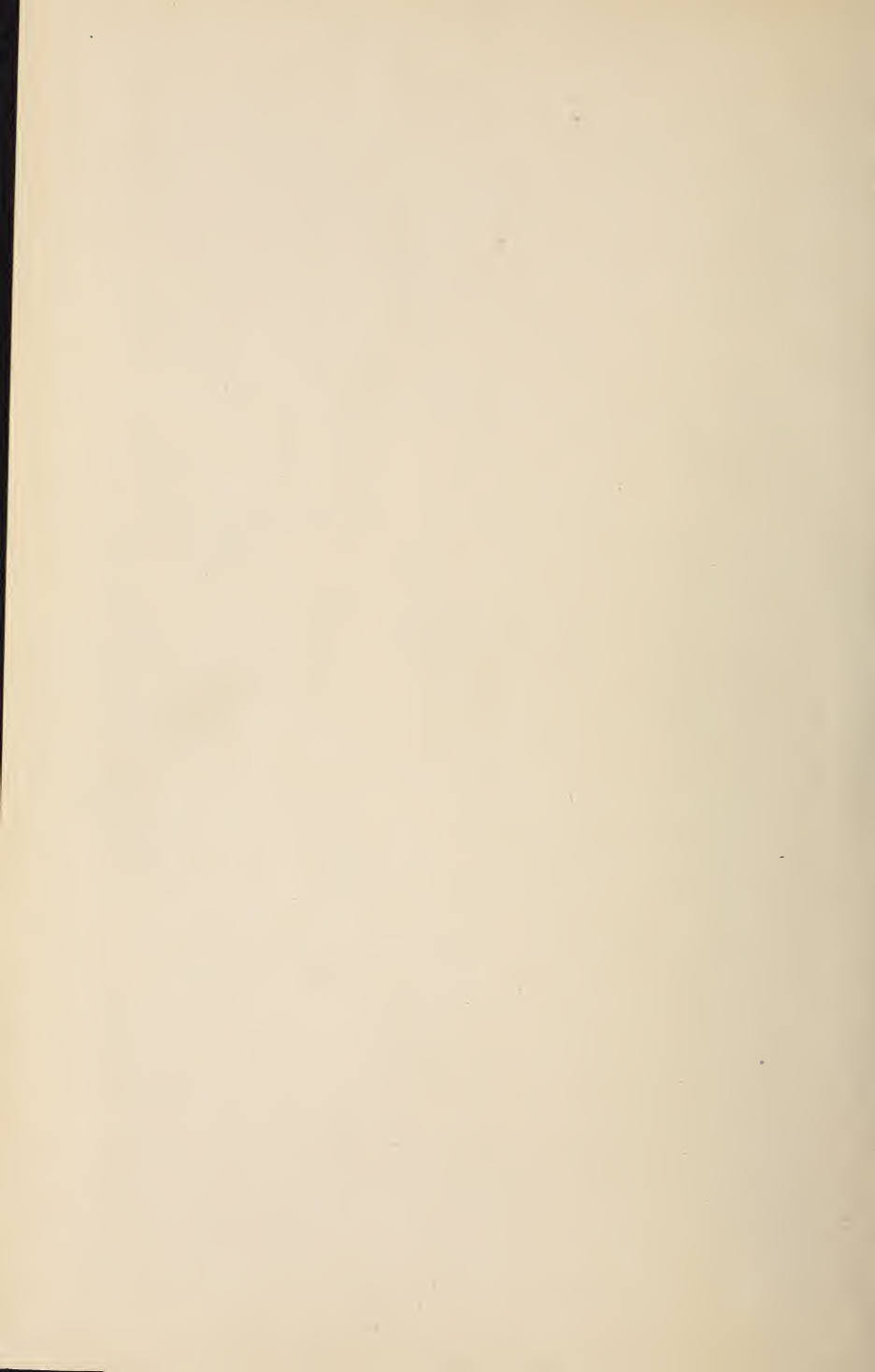
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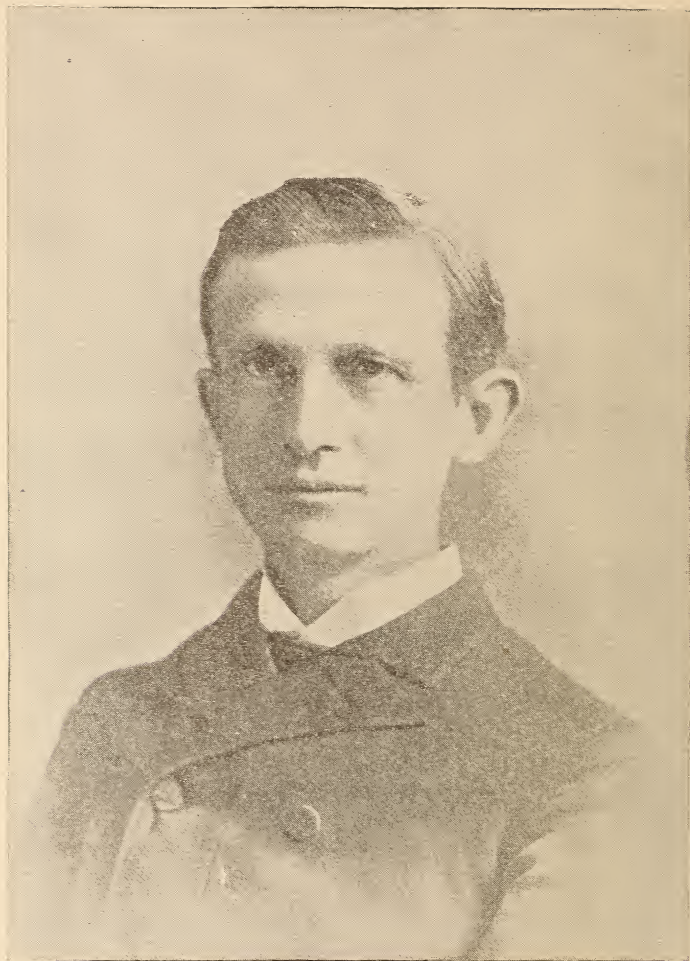
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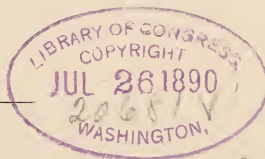
Thoughts on the Beatitudes

BY

REV. JESSE S. ^{Samuel}GILBERT, A. M.

AUTHOR OF

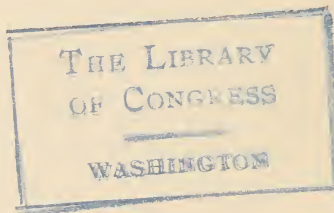
"THE OLD PATHS," ETC.



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CHAPTER I.

The Sermon on the Mount.

This discourse is so called from the place of its delivery.

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain : and when he was set, his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth and taught them saying."

The question naturally arises : From what mount or hill did Christ deliver this memorable address ? By universal consent, we must select one of the many hill-tops in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee. This is a region of great natural beauty. Josephus has left us a glowing description of its charms. Modern travelers bear the same testimony.

Tradition has chosen for the particular spot, a hill known as Mount Hattin, and on account of this tradition called the Mount of Beatitudes. Of this hill, Stanley, a very careful and exact observer, gives the following description :

"This mountain, or hill, for it only rises sixty feet above the plain, is that known to pilgrims as the Mount of Beatitudes, the supposed scene of the Sermon on the Mount. The tradition cannot lay claim to any early date ; it was in all probability suggested first to the Crusaders by its remarkable situation. But that situation so strikingly coincides with the intimations of the

Gospel narrative as almost to force the inference that in this instance the eyes of those who selected the spot were for once rightly directed. It is the only height seen in this direction from the shores of the Lake of Gennesareth. The plain on which it stands is easily accessible from the lake, and from that plain to the summit is but a few minutes walk. The platform at the top is evidently suitable for the collection of a multitude and corresponds precisely to the 'level place' (Luke vi, 17, mistranslated plain) to which he would 'come down' as from one of its higher horns to address the people. Its situation is central both to the peasants of the Galilean hills and the fishermen of the Galilean Lake, between which it stands, and would therefore be a natural resort both to Jesus and his disciples (Math. iv, 25-v. 1) when they retired for solitude from the shores of the sea, and also to the crowds who assembled from Galilee, from Decapolis, from Jerusalem, from Judea, and from beyond Jordan. None of the other mountains in the neighborhood could answer equally well to this description, inasmuch as they are merged into the uniform barrier of hills round the lake, whereas this stands separate, — 'the mountain,' — which alone could lay claim to a distinct name, with the exception of the one height of Tabor, which is too distinct to answer the requirements."*

This address of our Lord may with great propriety be called his inaugural discourse. It was delivered *primarily* to the twelve Apostles, whom he had just called and set apart to the work of preaching and spreading the Gospel, but also to the people who

*Stanley's Sinai and Palestine, pp. 360, 361 (2d ed., 368, 369.)

thronged to hear him. In this sermon is set forth the character and principles of the Kingdom of heaven, that true Kingdom, compared with which all earth-born kingdoms and dominions are but shadows and dreams. A sharp contrast is drawn between it and the traditional and ceremonial religion of the Scribes and Pharisees, and a no less sharper contrast between it and the worldly and godless spirit of the gentile world.

Christ had been accused of disregarding the law of Moses. From this charge he fully vindicated himself. He showed that he came not to destroy, but to fulfill, that in reality his kingdom had greater requirements than the old Mosaic law.

The old law said : "Thou shalt not kill" ; but the law of Christ condemns the angry look, the revengeful thought.

It was said to them of old time : "Thou shalt not commit adultery" ; but Christ's kingdom required purity of thought and motive, of speech and look. The purity of the old dispensation was outward and ceremonial, the kingdom of heaven demands the inner purity of the heart. All through this inaugural discourse, our Lord sets forth the spiritual nature and requirements of his kingdom, in sharp contrast with the formal and ceremonial nature of the Mosaic law, especially as interpreted by the Scribes and Pharisees. The old prophets spoke of Christ in two very different ways. Sometimes they portrayed him as "a man of sorrows," "despised and rejected of men," "a root out of a dry ground," having "no form nor comeliness," wounded, bruised, suffering, dying.

At other times they beheld him as a mighty con-

queror, ruling the nations with a rod of iron, clad in all the vestments of royalty, every knee bowing before him, and every tongue singing his praise.

The Scribes and Pharisees discarded all the prophecies bearing upon his humiliation, dwelt only upon those declaring his glory and gave to them a worldly and material interpretation.

Hence, they expected the Messiah to come in pomp and glory, to deliver them from the galling bondage of Rome, to reign as a temporal prince, and to make their nation the ruling power of the world. To such expectations Christ came as a great disappointment. Born in poverty, reared to manhood in obscure and ill-reputed Nazareth, surrounded by a bodyguard of tax-gatherers and fishermen, he was anything but the Messiah of Rabbinical expectation.

In this sermon Christ set forth the true nature of his kingdom. It is not a kingdom of worldly rule and pomp, yet a true kingdom, having its home in the heart and its subjects wherever sin yields to grace. It is to endure after all the kingdoms and powers of earth have become but memories of the past. Founded upon the eternal rock of truth, meeting the wants and aspirations of the human soul in every age, no wave of opposition can shake, no malice of earth or hell destroy it.

We have now in our mental vision the whole scene, the Preacher, the place, the audience, the discourse, and what a wondrous scene it is; fit subject for the pencil of the grandest artist ever born. A vast multitude hang upon the lips of the Galilean peasant.

It is not a gray-haired expounder of Rabbinical lore whom they have thronged to hear, but the humble

teacher of Nazareth, untaught in the schools of human philosophy, and but little over thirty years of age. His wisdom is the wisdom of heaven, his maxims and principles are not those commonly practiced among men, but such as those only can receive, into whose hearts the light of the divine kingdom has shone. He proclaims new and wondrous truth with such calm assurance, such serene authority, that the people are astonished beyond measure, because "he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." Thus is it ever. Assurance, authority, give the soul depth, and depth is always calm. The man who storms and raves is the man who doubts the truth of his own teaching.

The words of Jesus are as serene and clear as the morning star, as bright and potent as the rays of the noon-day sun:

"How sweetly flow'd the gospel's sound
From lips of gentleness and grace,
While list'ning thousands gathered 'round,
And joy and reverence filled the place.

From heaven he came, of heaven he spoke,
To heaven he led his foll'wers 'way ;
Dark clouds of gloomy night he broke,
Unveiling an immortal day."

The language in which these teachings of Jesus were uttered is no longer a living tongue among men : the dynasties that then ruled the world have passed away; the systems of philosophy taught in the schools at that time have long since ceased to reign in the empire of thought ; but those words of Jesus are to day the grandest and most potent force on earth.

Devoted men and women are bearing them to the most remote nations of the world. Peace and purity reign among men, just in proportion as they come up to the moral teachings and divine life set forth in this sermon on the mount. The general adoption of its spirit and principles would transform the world into a very Eden of blessing and gladness. Love, kindness and purity would dwell in every heart. The sword of war would rust away in its scabbard. The black waters of intemperance and crime would no longer deluge the earth. For the triumph of these principles, the coming of this glad era, do we pray, every time that we utter the petition : "thy kingdom come."

It is not proposed in this treatise to unfold all the teachings of this sermon, but only that portion known as the Beatitudes. They are nine in number, and have richly consoled many troubled and afflicted hearts.

"And he opened his mouth and taught them saying:
 ✓ *Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

✓ *Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.*

Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.

✓ *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled.*

Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.

✓ *Blessed are the peace-makers : for they shall be called the children of God.*

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are ye when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great *is* your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

How different are the teachings of Jesus from the common feeling among men. If we were asked to indicate who are the blessed or happy ones, we would naturally say, the rich, the great, those high in position or office, these are the happy ones.

Not thus does Jesus teach ;—the meek, the pure in heart, the mourning ones, the merciful, those persecuted for righteousness’ sake ; these are the truly blessed ones. The maxims of heavenly wisdom do not fall in with the dictates of human policy. Truly there are two kingdoms, the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of this world ; each having its own principles and each its own idea of success.

To succeed in one, is often to fail in the other.

One is bounded by the narrow horizon of earth and time, the other brings into view the infinite eras of eternity.

The fashion and glory of the kingdoms of this world pass away ; fade like the dissolving mists of morning ; but God’s kingdom standeth sure ; no revolution can shake, no opposition of earth or hell can harm it. Blessed are those having a part and a hope in this kingdom. They may be poor in the goods of this world, they may suffer under the iron heel of persecution ; like

Paul they may seal their testimony with their blood, like Bunyan they may pine away in prison, like their Master they may lead a life of toils and tears ; but on such "*the second death hath no power,*" and "*they shall be priests of God and of Christ.*"

CHAPTER II.

The Poor in Spirit.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

The first utterances of the Great Teacher are words of blessing.

Seven different phases of character are pronounced happy or blessed, for either word may be employed as a translation of the Greek. As seven is the symbolic number of perfection, this would seem to imply the perfection and and blessedness of the Christian character, and beautifully accord with the closing words of the chapter containing these beatitudes : “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” The first blessing is pronounced upon the “poor in spirit.” The nature of this blessing turns us at once away from the carnal and material.

It is not an ascetic benediction pronounced upon poverty, but the balm of heavenly consolation for broken and contrite hearts.

Only the “poor in *spirit*” can claim this blessing, and all such can claim it, even though they be rich in the things of this life. By the “poor in spirit” is not meant those having but little of the grace of God, and leading a merely nominal christian life ; for those are only spiritually poor.

The poor in spirit feel deeply their sinfulness and are keenly conscious of their need of Christ.

David in the penitential wailing of his sorrow, after he had committed his great sin against God and man ; the thief on the cross humbly beseeching the dying Saviour, simply to remember him in the coming hour of his glory ; will serve as illustrations or representatives of that class upon which the first benediction of Jesus is pronounced.

This benediction stands first, because it is the foundation of all that follow. Repentance and confession are the entrance door into all the blessings of the kingdom. *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."*

"For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I will dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

To the poor in spirit, then, belongs the blessedness of preparation. Every great work has a preparatory state. The culture and refinement of the great city must be preceded by the axe of the pioneer, and the log cabin of the first settler. Summer fruits come after the swelling buds, and fragrant blossoms of the spring time.

We urge upon men the acceptance of Christ, when as yet they do not feel their need of him. In other words we offer before we convince. We seek to uprear the new spiritual temple before the old bulwarks of pride and self-sufficiency have been torn away.

Then is it any wonder that our work is short-lived

and vain, that multitudes drift quickly and easily in the church, and as quickly and easily drift out again? The great need of the day is plainness and thoroughness in dealing with the souls of men. The plough share of divine truth must go down into the subsoil of the heart and conscience. In no other way can we secure a hardy and healthy religious life. About much of the religion of the day there is vast amount of gilt and tinsel. The trouble is that we do not start right. A mere sentimentalism often takes the place of down-right, old fashioned conviction and penitence.

The cross is covered with flowers. The pathway to heaven is strewn with roses. It would be about as easy to trace with the eye the lines of latitude and longitude upon the surface of the earth, as to discern in the lives of many professed christians, any line of separation between the church and the world. If we would correct these evils we must go back to first principles. We must teach men that without Christ they are poor and vile, blind and wretched; that if they would enter the kingdom of heaven, they must come by the way of the broken and contrite heart. The history of the church on earth furnishes many beautiful illustrations of the benediction pronounced upon the poor in spirit. Some of the most tender and touching of these illustrations are from the Parables of Jesus. What a beautiful picture we have in the prodigal son, coming back to his Father's house, foot-sore and weary, covered with rags, faint with hunger, and exclaiming in his broken-hearted penitence: "Father I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son!"

In another exquisite parable we are told of two men

who went up into the temple to pray, the one a proud Pharisee, the other a despised publican.

The Pharisee stood and prayed *with himself*, thanking God that he was so much better than others, that he fasted twice in the week, that he gave tithes of all that he possessed ; but the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying : "God be merciful to me a sinner."

"I tell you," said Jesus, "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other ; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

On still another occasion did Jesus teach the necessity of humility. On a certain time the Disciples quarrelled among themselves, as to who should be the greatest ; the old, old quarrel by which kingdoms have been shaken and great churches divided. Jesus took a little child, and having placed the little one in the midst of the angry and exited group, said : "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Still the same old lesson : Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Some of the purest and noblest saints of the Most High have most deeply lamented their unworthiness, have written the most bitter things against themselves. In the utterances of Paul, Bunyan, Wesley, Paysen and

Kindred spirits, we find the deepest humility, the most utter self-loathing, the most intense yearning after God. We are not to infer that such souls are really worse and more needy than others. Far from it, but they have gone up so far upon the mount of God, that the divine glory reveals to them, all the deeper and darker by contrast, the stains and spots of earth's defilement. They are not comparing themselves with men, but with God. We are not wise in comparing ourselves with ourselves. As well might a sick man in some hospital, lying upon his bed of pain and fever, flatter himself that he enjoyed a good degree of health, because so many others were in a worse state than he. As well might a man in prison for some minor offence deem himself a saint because not a burglar or a murderer.

If we would know our true state, we must compare ourselves with God and his holy law.

If we do this, so far from being lifted up with pride, we will cry out with the prophet: "Woe is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." Happy will it be for us, if the angel of light, that with a live coal from off the altar, cleansed the soul of the prophet, shall in like manner purge away our iniquity.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." Not poverty of thought, nor of courage, nor of emotion, — not empty-mindedness, nor any idea implying a real lack of strength, variety and richness of nature, — was here intended. It was to be a consciousness of moral incompleteness. As the sense of poverty in this world's goods inspires men to enterprise, so the consciousness of a

poverty of manliness might be expected to lead to earnest endeavors for moral growth.

This first sentence was aimed full at that supreme self-complacency which so generally resulted from the school of the Pharisee. Paul's interpretation of his own experience illustrates the predominant spirit. He once had no higher idea of character than that inculcated in the law of Moses, and he wrote of his attainments: "Touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless." He was a perfect man.

The world was full of perfect men. Groups of them were to be found in every synagogue. To be sure they were worldly, selfish, ambitious, vindictive, but without the consciousness of being the worse for all that. Rigorous exactitude in a visible routine gave them the right to thank God that they were not as other men were. For such men in such moods, there could be no spiritual life. They could never sympathize with that new life which was coming upon the world, in which the treasures were love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

But those who painfully felt the poverty of their inward nature in all these excellencies might rise to the blessings of the new kingdom, "in which dwelleth righteousness."

In the homely, yet sweetly expressive, language of John Bunyan:

"He that is down need fear no fall ;
 He that is low no pride ;
 He that is humble ever shall
 Have God to be his guide.

CHAPTER III.

Those that Mourn.

“Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.”

“God in Israel sows the seeds
Of affliction, pain, and toil ;
These spring up and choke the weeds
Which would else o’erspread the soil.
Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer,
Trials bring me to his feet,
Lay me low and keep me there.

COWPER.

The second Beatitude is pronounced upon the mourner : “Blessed are they that mourn.” Jesus did not mean by this that mourning is in itself a blessing, or to be desired ; for the very blessedness of these mourners is, that “they shall be comforted.”

It is plain that the mourning referred to cannot be the ordinary grief of men over loss of earthly good.

Such sorrow is common and natural to all men, and where the heart is not hallowed and softened by grace, often results in despair and death. To the child of God trouble and affliction are sanctified, but the same sun that melts the wax only hardens the clay.

The blessed or happy mourner is he who mourns over his sins and penitently looks to God for pardon

and mercy. Thus we see how the second Beatitude follows upon the first. Such mourners are sure to be comforted. They shall be comforted by the pardon of all their sins and by the grace and favor of God. This "godly sorrow" over sin differs widely from the sorrow that springs merely from the loss and suffering that sin has entailed.

Such sorrow bewails not the sin, but merely the consequences, and is no better than the lashings of remorse.

True penitence sorrows for sin, because God has been offended and his holy law transgressed.

David sinned bitterly against society, against his fellow creatures, against Uriah, and Bathsheba, and Joab, and all Israel, but the most tormenting thought to him was, that he had sinned against God.

"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight!" is his heart-broken cry.

The poor prodigal comes home, and his confession begins: "Father I have sinned against heaven."

This is ever the essence of real repentance, it is "toward God." Sentimental regrets over human weakness, the lashings of remorse, lamentations over the losses and misfortunes entailed by sin, never lift the soul any nearer to God or heaven.

But the true penitent, mourning over his sins, looking to Jesus for help, soon finds salvation and peace. The clouds are dispelled, the shadows fly, tears of sorrow give place to tears of joy, the seal of divine pardon is stamped upon the soul, and the poor mourner is transformed into a child of God and heir of glory. Then can he sing:

"My God is reconciled;
 His pardoning voice I hear;
 He owns me for his child;
 I can no longer fear;
 With confidence I now draw nigh,
 And Father, Abba, Father, cry."

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Even after the soul has thus passed into the life of God, there are seasons of mourning. The christian is not always upon the mountain top. Temptations and trials, sorrows and afflictions come sooner or later to all. No degree of holiness or piety can afford exemption.

Paul had a "thorn in the flesh," Luther was sorely buffeted by the devil, Paysen seemed at times to be beset by all the hosts of darkness; even the Son of Man himself felt the tempter's power, and although without sin, was "in all points tempted like as we are."

Often the child of God mourns over his low spiritual state, his feeble attainments, his imperfections and failings. He compares his actual with his possible state, and bewails his leanness of soul. The purest and the best of God's saints have passed through just such seasons. There are christians that refuse to sing: "Prove to wander, Lord, I feel it"—because they say they are beyond and above all such experiences, but these do not represent the highest type of christianity. If they were nearer to the sun, they would more clearly see their defects. The most pious men and women that have adorned the annals of the church, have past the most humble estimate upon their own attainments.

Blessed indeed are these mourning pilgrims. Their

pathway shall shine "more and more unto the perfect day."

Through the valley of humility they shall pass onward and upward to the mountain-tops of blessing. As the majestic river takes its rise from some modest fountain, far up among the snow-capped hills, so does a broad and deep experience spring from the secret fountain of child-like faith and humble prayer.

The christian is often a mourner, through affliction and pain. Like others he is exposed to all the vicissitudes and ills of human life. Unlike others his sorrow is not without hope. He can lean upon the strong arm of Jesus. He knows that "*all things work together for good, to them that love God.*"

These afflictions only work out the glory of God and his own highest good.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

The mourning saint is comforted and sustained here, he will be fully comforted hereafter.

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

"There is a region lovelier far
Than sages tell or poets sing,
Brighter than noontide glories are,
And softer than the tints of spring.

It is all holy and serene,
 The land of glory and repose;
 No cloud obscures the radiant scene,
 And not a tear of sorrow flows."

This happy land is not a phantom or a myth, but heaven, the saints eternal rest, the place that Jesus has gone to prepare for them that love him.

In that bright land of bliss and song, all the tears of earth shall be wiped away, and the weary pilgrims find endless peace and rest.

Often does the child of God find occasion for mourning in the depressed state of Zion, the apathy and coldness of professed christians, the sins and sorrows of a godless and dying world. With Jeremiah, he exclaims: "*Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!*"

He is almost ready to cry with Paul: "*For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*"

Let not gay worldlings or cold hearted, nominal christians think such sorrow strange or unmanly. It has dwelt in the breasts of the purest and noblest.

"Did Christ o'er sinners weep,
 And shall our cheeks be dry."

The church is powerless that does not burn and glow with a sacred agony for sinners.

Such mourning will give place to the deepest joy: for christians animated by such feelings will toil faithfully in the vineyard, and God hath promised that his word shall not return unto him void. Christians, like their divine Lord, shall see of the travail of their souls

and be satisfied. It often seems in the conflict between light and darkness, that the forces of evil are triumphant: but there can be no doubt about the final issue. God and truth must overcome. The cross is the emblem of certain victory.

In a great conflict, there may be temporary and local defeats, while all the time the main army is pressing on to sure and glorious victory. Noah and his family were faithful among the faithless; the only bright spot in a weary wilderness of sin and shame. Elijah stood firm for God, when in all Israel only seven thousand could be found that had not bowed the knee to Baal. Isaiah cried: "*Who hath believed our reports and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?*" In every age, thus far, the people of God have been a "little flock." But it will not always be so. In the grand age to follow, when Christ in person comes to reign, the whole earth will be filled with the glory of God. The old prophets beheld this day and were glad. John had a vision of it from the rock-bound isle of Patmos. It is coming on. Each rising sun brings it nearer.

"The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down: neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it."

“Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his succession journeys run;
His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
Till moon shall wax and wane no more.”

Then blessed are all those mourners, whose sorrow is such as belongs to the people of God. They shall be comforted. Their present sorrow is like the darkness that precedes the morn. The tears of earth shall be transmuted into gems of beauty that will flash and shine forever in the diadem of life.

The blood-washed multitudes that now sing the song of redeeming love in the Paradise on high, were once pilgrims and strangers here below, battled with all the powers of darkness, and wept tears of sorrow and pain: but now they are forever blest. What to them are the sorrows and conflicts of earth?

When the shore is reached at last,
Who will count the billows past?

By and by, if we are faithful, we will join their ranks and sing their songs. The sorrows and trials of earth will give place to the eternal peace of heaven.

CHAPTER IV.

The Meek.

“Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.”

Many of the christian graces, as courage, fortitude and patience, commend themselves to men of the world. It is not so with meekness. Philosophy and song never celebrated the praises of the meek. To resent an injury, to punish an enemy, has always been regarded, outside of Christ's teaching, as a proper and noble thing to do. Among the heathen, to hate an enemy, has always been regarded as much a duty as to love a friend. With this accord the teachings of the old Greek and Roman writers. One of the qualities of the good man described by Cicero is, that he hurts no one, except he be injured himself. Aristotle speaks of meekness as a defect, and of revenge as a more manly thing.

Meekness is generally regarded as less manly and noble than revenge or anger. So far is this from being the case that true meekness, the meekness commended and exhibited by Christ, is consistent with the highest courage. Can all history show a braver, grander life, than that of Jesus Christ? Yet was he “meek and lowly of heart.” He uttered burning words against sin, drove the unholy throng of money-changers and merchants out of the temple ; always bore swift and strong wit-

ness for the truth, and to save a world of sin and suffering, braved the awful agonies of the Cross. With a firm step and a serene brow, but with a *meek* and *gentle* heart, did the Son of Man tread this path-way of conflict and pain. Tempted, insulted, rejected, deserted, crucified, tried as no man has been before or since ; not one word of passion, impatience, fear or hatred passed his lips. Behold him on the Cross, a spectacle for men and angels, dying a death of shame, of slow and awful agony ; faint, bleeding, thirsting, every vein throbbing with fever, every nerve quivering with pain.

“ His sacred limbs they stretch, they tear;
 With nails they fasten to the wood;
 His sacred limbs, exposed and bare,
 Or only covered with his blood.

Behold his temples, crown'd with thorn;
 His bleeding hands, extended wide;
 His streaming feet, transfixed and torn;
 The fountain gushing from his side.”

He speaks : for what purpose have those pale lips parted, to utter curses upon his foes, to summon angelic hosts to his rescue ? No, hear O heavens ! and be astonished, O earth ! to breathe to the Father a prayer for mercy upon his murderers. “ *Father forgive them :*” and then as though anxious to find some loop-hole through which a ray of mercy might dart, he adds, “*for they know not what they do.*” Was there ever such an exhibition of patient suffering, of love and meekness ? Yet there was no craven fear, no call for release, no shrinking back from the agonies of redemption.

Who then dare say that meekness and courage are

exclusive of each other? So far from this being true, meekness is an attribute of the highest and purest manhood. The very possession of this grace is in itself a blessing. If it were not added "*for they shall inherit the earth;*" it would still be true that "*blessed are the meek.*"

Many of the followers of Jesus have been bright examples of this grace. It is true that they have fallen far behind the divine model, for like the moon, christians, even the best of christians, shine with a borrowed and a lesser light. But as a single drop of water, is as really water as the whole ocean, having within its tiny liquid sphere all the properties and characteristics of water, so meekness in the disciple is the same in kind as meekness in the Lord.

Our perfection is to be "*as,*" similar to, the same in nature as the perfection of our "Father which is in heaven."

We read of Moses that he was "*very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.*"

Paul a prisoner standing before the royal Agrippa, had no malice or enmity in his great heart of love, but wished that even his enemies and persecutors might share with him the grace and mercy of God. "*And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.*"

Stephen, the first christian Martyr was a shining example of meekness.

"*And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*

And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice,

Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had this, he fell asleep."

Stephen was only the first in a mighty host. We may trace the history of the true church of Christ, all along the ages, by the blood marks of her martyrs. A countless multitude of strong men, of tender women, yea, and of little children too, have sealed their testimony with their blood. Like the saints of a still older time; "*they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword : they wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented ; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.*"

Prominent in their characters, was the grace of meekness. They often died as Stephen and their master died, with a prayer for their murderers upon their lips. The blessing of the meek was upon them. Yet this blessing seems a strange one to rest upon a martyr. "*Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.*"

The word translated "earth," might be rendered the land, a seeming reference to Canaan as the land of promise. In one sense this promise has a sort of literal fulfillment even in this present dispensation. All things, including of course, for the greater must include the less, "*things present*" "the land," belong to the children of God. Not in a course, material sense is this true, for "*man shall not live by bread alone,*" and again "*a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*" But if the divine life is in a man's soul, he can see his Father's hand and feel his Father's presence in all things about him. To such an one :

"The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament showeth his handy work." If "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof;" is not he adopted into the Lord's family, and is he not one of the heirs of God? Is he poor and in need? The gold, the silver, and the cattle upon a thousand hills belong to God, and through God to him.

All nature is to him vocal with the praises of God, and bright with the divine presence. He hears the voice of God in the thunder of the ocean, in the sighing of the night-wind, in the patter of the rain, in the sublime march of the tempest; and this not in a cold, pantheistic sense; God is to him a real personality, a living and sacred presence.

Such an one though clad in the mean garments of poverty, can be truly said to inherit the earth.

"He looks abroad into the varied field
Of nature; and though poor, perhaps, compared
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers; his to enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say, "my Father made them all."

This experience is well described by Jonathan Edwards, the great metaphysician of New England, who tells us that he "spent much of his time in viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things; in the meantime singing forth with a low voice, his contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer."

The promise to the meek has in addition to this, a spiritual fulfillment. The land of Canaan, to which there seems to be a reference in the Saviour's words, typified not only the heavenly rest, but also the kingdom of grace, the land of faith and love. This the meek inherit in all its fullness, in the entire sweep of its length and breadth. It is indeed

“A land of corn, and wine, and oil,
Favour'd with God's peculiar smile,
With every blessing blest;
There dwells the Lord our Righteousness,
And keeps his own in perfect peace,
And everlasting rest.”

Upon this land shines the sun of righteousness, along its vales and hills, grow the lily of the valley and the rose of Sharon. It is fanned by breezes from the mountains of God, and watered by rills from the river of life. The angels of God walk its bowers, and pitch their silvery tents all along its path-ways. Its inhabitants feed upon heavenly manna, and ever and anon through its clear, bright atmosphere, like Christians in the land of Beulah, catch a vision of the celestial city.

Not only do the meek inherit this land, but none save the meek can inherit it. The revengeful, the unholy, the cruel, the impure, have no place in the land of peace and purity. Only the white-robed can enter there.

This promise to the meek has again a literal fulfillment. The land of Canaan typified also the Christian's final rest in glory. The earthly Canaan is a type of the heavenly Canaan. There is one day to be not only a new heaven, but a new earth. Out of the smoke

and ashes of this old, sin-cursed grave-scared earth, shall emerge a new earth in which shall dwell righteousness.

This shall the meek inherit. We have Paradise lost at one end of the Bible, but we have Paradise restored at the other. The curse shall be lifted. All tears shall be wiped away. There shall be no more sin, nor pain, nor death.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Then shall the Saviour's promise be fulfilled to the utmost letter: the meek *shall* inherit the earth. This day is fast approaching. Sin and wrong may triumph for a season, but their time is short. The future, all the countless ages of eternity belong to truth and right. We can afford to wait and be patient. Let us cultivate the grace of meekness. It is a gem of priceless value. It may not commend us to the world. Men of the world may even think us wild or simple.

But we will have the highest of all honor, that which cometh from God. One thing is certain, we cannot have both, the praise of a godless world, and the honor that comes from a holy God. There is a choice, a selection to be made. We cannot serve two masters, especially where the masters have no common interests. If we would have the blessings of the meek, we must bear the cross of the meek. We must take part in the perils and privations of the campaign, if we would share in the rejoicings and spoils of victory.

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they

may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

CHAPTER V.

They which do hunger and thirst after Righteousness.

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled.” Math. v. vi.

Hunger and thirst are here used to typify the keenest desires and warmest aspirations of the soul. The soul has its needs as well as the body. The bread of life is as essential as the bread that perisheth. Next to the actual possession of holiness, is the blessedness of ardent longing for it. This implies a degree of purity already existing, or else there could not be such an earnest desire for so spiritual a blessing. The carnal heart has no such heavenly aspirations. The flowers of such pure desire, can only spring from a soil already watered by the dews of God’s grace.

The terms employed, hunger and thirst, express the intensity of the desire. It is not a mere sentimental longing, or the deference often paid to holiness in the abstract, by men of impure hearts and lives, upon which a blessing is pronounced.

Hunger and thirst are the demands of our physical natures for food and drink, and unless these demands are met, we must die.

In like manner, the wants and aspirations of the soul must be supplied, or our higher nature will starve and perish.

Hunger and thirst have long been used as types of intense desire. Virgil speaks of the "cursed hunger after gold." Men hunger and thirst for fame, riches and pleasure. But these desires spring from the carnal and depraved heart, whilst the longing after righteousness comes through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The desire for earthly good may never be realized, or if for a short season enjoyed, must at the very best, perish in the using. How eagerly do the children of the world pursue pleasure, yet it palls upon the jaded appetite, and they turn away weary, disgusted and unsatisfied.

"Pleasures are like poppies spread,
 You seize the flower, its bloom is shed ;
 Or like the snow-falls in the river,
 A moment white, then melts forever ;
 Or like the rain-bow's lovely form,
 Evanescent amid the storm."

The deathless soul, man's highest and best nature, can no more be fed upon earthly pleasure, than the life of the body can be preserved upon husks and straw. It is not in the power of earth's pleasures to satisfy immortal cravings.

Fame can do no better. Ambition is said to be the folly of noble minds, but ambitious dreams can never fill and satisfy a human soul. Thousands toil and struggle to reach fame's glittering temple, but miserably perish at the base of the hill. Others reach the goal of their desires only to be rudely hurled back into disgrace and obscurity.

The multitude that cry, "hosanna," to-day, on the morrow may cry "crucify him, crucify him."

One age erects an idol, and the succeeding generation sets it aside for another. Men turn from the setting to the rising sun. Even were a man to reach ambitions highest goal, and there to remain, to live and to die the idol of his age, and then to have his memory revered to the end of time, still would the soul cry out for something higher and better.

“These feverish dews that on my temple’s hang,
This quivering lip, these eyes of dying flame—
These, the dread signs of many a secret pang—
These are the meeds of him who pants for fame.”

This is the testimony of one who knew whereof he affirmed.

Even the pursuit of knowledge cannot *fill* the soul. The field is so vast, that there comes over the thoughtful mind a painful sense of its poverty. A Newton or a Humboldt can but wander along the shore. The vast ocean rolls beyond. But were it possible for a human intellect to sweep through the whole realm of knowledge, to count and weigh the stars to unbraid the beams of morning, to disclose the secrets of the rocks, to unroll the musty annals of history and over the plains of mental vision to marshall the armies and navies, the emperors and philosophers, the states and kingdoms of ages past, yea, to traverse through all art and all science ; all literature and all wisdom, still without God and his righteousness, the soul would return unsatisfied and fold its weary pinions over a heart disquieted and sad.

“Sorrow is knowledge ; they who know the most
Must mourn the deepest o’er the fatal truth,
The tree of knowledge is not that of life.

But they that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be *filled, satisfied, saturated*; for it takes all three translations to bring out the full meaning of the Greek. Here we find rest, peace, satisfaction, and here only. The best aspirations of the soul can be met nowhere else. Alike from the gay bowers of pleasure, the gray halls of learning, and the glowing temple of fame, comes the sad refrain, "it is not in me."

The Saviour's promise is a positive one. It is not may, or can, but shall be filled. There is no doubt about it. The righteousness here spoken of, is not legal righteousness, justification, not ceremonial purity, but heart purity, a cleansing of the soul and life.

The old Scribes and Pharisees were familiar with ceremonial purity, a purity that only concerned itself with the outside of the platter, that garnished and white-washed the sepulchre; but, alas! of heart purity they knew but little. To them, Christ spoke in an unknown tongue. This righteousness is not to be found in any mere ceremony.

It is not in the water of baptism, or in the bread and wine of the Lord's supper. It is not in altar or priest. It comes to the soul only through the influence of the Holy Ghost. It does not come unsought or undesired.

There must be a preparation for it, a hungering and thirsting after it. Let us now consider the blessedness of a soul thus filled and satisfied.

Such a soul is at rest, is no longer tossed upon the strong sea of passion and desire. God's righteousness soothes, calms, quiets. It takes the fever from the veins, the ache and pain from the heart, the wrinkles of

care and sorrow from face and brow. There is a calmness and rest in the very countenance of one who walks and communes with God. His heart is no longer consumed by the cares and vanities of life. To one standing on some tall mountain peak, the rivers and streams look like tiny ribbons, the towns appear as toy houses and men as pigmies ; so to one far up on the everlasting hills of purity, all the things of earth, that men of the world so much esteem, appear but as the small dust of the balance. The soul thus filled with righteousness resembles God, bears the divine image.

There are many of the divine attributed to which we cannot aspire. We cannot pray or hope to be like God in power, or wisdom or omnipresence ; but we can pray and strive to be like him in purity or holiness. The "beauty of the Lord our God" may be upon us. God is infinitely holy, holy in all his ways and works. He cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. Holiness is stamped upon all his works. He made the angels pure. Man as he came from the hand of his maker, was pure. The heavenly hosts as they bend before the great white throne, cry ; "*holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.*" The saints give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. The more we study the divine character, the more clearly will we see that over all his attributes and works, is thrown the white radiance of his holiness. To be like God in this respect, to be filled with his righteousness, may all his saints aspire. Humboldt said after writing his immortal *Cosmos* : "Oh God, I think thy thoughts after thee."

But the Christian can not only ponder upon the

thoughts of God ; he can show forth in some humble degree the divine holiness, can reflect upon a sad and sinful world, the purity and righteousness with which God has filled his soul.

The soul that is filled with righteousness is in sympathy with all that is good. Between such a soul and the plans and will of the heavenly Father, there can be no discord. When the Christian has measured up to this promise and benediction, he looks upon sin in all its forms with the utmost loathing. The eye is not more sensitive to dust than is the purified soul to sin. Such a state Charles Wesley described, when he wrote :

“I want a principle within,
Of jealous, godly fear ;
A sensibility of sin,
A pain to feel it near ;
I want the first approach to feel,
Of pride, or fond desire;
To catch the wand’ring of my will,
And quench the kindling fire.”

The soul filled with righteousness is prepared for Heaven. Heaven is not only a happy but a holy place, happy because holy.

“In heaven alone no sin is found,
And there’s no weeping there.”

There are many who think much about the rest and joy of heaven, but forget that there must be a moral fitness for heaven. Heaven would have no joy or peace for a carnal heart. If the songs and service of God’s earthly worship have no joy for us, what attraction can there be in the higher and holier service of heaven ?

Only the pure in heart can see God upon his heavenly throne. This heart purity, this fullness of righteousness must be sought here. It is folly and madness to hope for death to transform our characters and tastes. Death has no power to change the sinner to a saint.

It is said by some, that if we were thus filled with the righteousness of God, we should be unfitted for the the cares and duties of ordinary life, and God must at once transfer us to Heaven. So far is this from being true, that a christian is never so well prepared for the work of life, as when thus filled with God's light and power. Were the apostles taken to Heaven at once, when filled with the mighty baptism of Pentacost? The baptism was for life and work, not for death. Earth hath much greater need of such power than heaven. It was when the lips of the prophet had been cleansed by the sacred fire, his iniquity taken away, and his sin purged, that he could say, "here am I ; send me."

This divine power is the great need of the church to-day. Without it, wealth, numbers social position, learning are but the small dust of the balance. Filled with this holy power, one could chase a thousand, and two put ten-thousand to flight.

The weakest would become as David, and David as an angel of light.

Many christians seem to hunger and thirst after the vanities and follies, the vain show and fashion of a dying and godless world. Would that instead they were led to hunger and thirst after the things of God. It is not the assaults of sceptics, nor the arguments of rationalism and infidelity, that weaken and impair the strength of

Zion. These are forces from without, and fall as harmlessly upon the everlasting foundations of God's truth, as the waves that break in foam and spray upon the rocks of Gibraltar. But the deadness and coldness of many, the indifference of some, and the treason of others; these sap the foundations of her strength and dry up the fountain's of her life.

These smite the walls and foundations of Zion with a dry rot, more fatal than myriads of enemies in the open field.

For the very sake of comfort, we ought to be filled with righteousness. The lukewarm christian has a sorry time of it. He cannot enjoy the world as he once did, and he certainly does not enjoy God. In seeking to serve God and mammon, he loses both; for they can no more be united in the heart of the same person, than darkness and light, good and evil can come together and be as one.

"Tis worse than death my God to love,
And not my God alone."

May our hearts be turned away from the perishing things of earth and fastened upon things divine, then shall we be filled with righteousness, and being thus filled, shall be blessed far beyond any experiences of the past.

CHAPTER VI.

The Merciful.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Matt. v. VII.

“The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath; It is twice blessed:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.”

SHAKESPEARE.

A beautiful description of the merciful has been given us by Erasmus. “The merciful are those who, through brotherly love, account another person’s misery their own; who weep over the calamities of others; who, out of their own property, feed the hungry and clothe the naked; who admonish those that are in error, inform the ignorant, pardon the offending, and who, in short, use their utmost endeavors to relieve and comfort others.”

Mercy is a very prominent feature in the divine character, and hence the merciful man bears in this respect the image of God. It is said of the Almighty that his tender mercies are over all his works. It is only by the mercy of God that sinners are not consumed. He bears with the wickedness and folly of men, because he would have all men come to repentance and eternal life.

The mercy of God is seen in nature. The bright beams of the morning, the flowery plain, the waving harvest, the early and latter rain, the ceaseless succession of day and night, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, all proclaim the divine goodness and love, the *mercy* of God. When the race became sinful, God might have dried up the fountain of every stream, he might have quenched the light of every star, and thrown over the fair face of nature a pall of universal blackness, but mercy stayed his hand, and the sun shone on, the gentle shower fell upon the parched field, flowers bloomed, fruits ripened, and the harvest tossed its golden plumes in the soft rays of an autumn sun. Our poor earth, scarred by the plow-share of death from pole to pole, groaning under the tears and sins of six-thousand years, still bears upon her hill-tops and plains the impress of God's tenderness and mercy. Healing plants twine and blossom around the darkened chamber of the invalid, flowers bloom amid volcanic lava, and the swollen bosom of the tempest is illuminated by the rainbow of peace and promise.

But if we turn from nature to grace, we will see still brighter displays of the divine mercy. Beautifully did Watts sing,

“Part of thy name divinely stands,
On all thy creatures writ ;
They show the labor of thy hands,
Or impress of thy feet.

But when we view thy strange design
To save rebellious worms,
Where vengeance and compassion join
In their divinest forms.

Here the whole Deity is known,
 Nor dare a creature guess
 Which of the glorees brighter shone,
 The justice or the grace."

The gentle hand of mercy stayed the sword of justice. Even to our first parents, crushed beneath their load of sin and misery came a promise of salvation. In the ascending smoke of Abel's sacrifice, in all the types and shadows of the Jewish ritual, the blood-sprinkled door-posts, the cherubim bending over the mercy-seat, the scape goat fleeing away into the wilderness, we see symbolized the mercy of God. We hear its sweet undertone in the song of the inspired poet, and in the thrilling, burning words of the prophet. All through the Old Testament, woven into its very warp and woof, imbedded deep in its precepts and warnings, runs the scarlet thread of mercy. In the New Testament the divine mercy is expressed in a single sentence, a sentence that Martin Luther called a little Bible, and in which is condensed the very essence of all revelation: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

The love of God moved his heart to thus give his son, love brought the Saviour from the skies, love nerved him for his sublime and awful sacrifice, love sustained him amid the agonies of the garden and the cross.

We see the mercy of God in the pardon and salvation of great and notorious sinners, as Manasseh, King of Judah, Mary Magdelene, Saul of Tarsus, John Bun-

yan and thousands of others brought up from the very depths of sin and error.

Happy must be the man in whose heart glows the divine flame of mercy. In this he is like God. In a degree he can enter into the thoughts and feelings of God. His soul is calm. He breathes the very atmosphere of heaven, for heaven is the perfection of love, as hell is the perfection of hatred. Anger, malice, revenge, rage, jealousy find no lodgement within his breast. If we would still more clearly see the beauty and blessedness of mercy, we must consider the nature and effects of its opposites, hatred and revenge. These evil passions have filled the world with crime and misery, have stained its fields and plains with human blood, turned large cities and peaceful villages into deserted ash-heaps, pitched tribes, nations and empires against each other, and made widows and orphans by the million.

The merciful are pronounced blessed by our Saviour, because "*they shall obtain mercy.*"

This principle enters into our Lord's Prayer. "*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*"

Again, "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you :*

"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

This is the same principal announced by the Apostle : "*for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.*" How can a man dare to hope for mercy from God, when he refuses the same to a fellow mortal ?

In one of his matchless parables, the Saviour illustrates and reiterates the principle contained in this

beatitude, that the merciful and only the merciful can obtain mercy.

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?”

Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times : but, Until seventy times seven.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents.

But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me and I will pay thee all.

Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence : and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And he would not : but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said

unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me :

Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee ?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

An incident in the life of Wesley beautifully illustrates this parable :

Gov. Orglethrope, a fellow-passenger with him in the voyage to America, became very much enraged at his colored servant, because he had broken open and drank several bottles of very choice wine that the Governor had stored away for his private use. Wesley interceded for the trembling offender, and tried to calm the passion of the excited and enraged Orglethrope. "Sir," said he to Wesley, "I never forgive." "Then," calmly replied Mr. Wesley, "I hope you never offend." This had the desired effect. The Governor was calmed and the poor servant forgiven. "It becomes a question affecting our own state before God, whether we are of a forgiving spirit or not. If we are unwilling to forgive those who have injured us, are we ourselves forgiven ? If we can go forth into the world from hearing the gospel message, and, finding anyone there who has done us wrong, can act, or speak, or think toward them in an unkind or unmerciful way, is it not sadly plain that the message of the gospel has not reached our hearts, and that God's mercy in Jesus Christ has not really been laid hold of by us ?"*

*The Parables of our Lord Explained and Applied. Rev. Francis Bourdillon, M. A. Page 148.

The great need of the church in this age, and in every age, for that matter, is a mighty baptism of the spirit of love.

It was said in the days of old, in the days of primitive simplicity and power, "See how these Christians love each other"; and not only did they love each other, but their hearts went out in love to a lost and dying world.

There is nothing mean or selfish about the true christian. He sings, and loves to sing

"The arms of love that compass me
Would all mankind embrace."

His own joy in God is often subdued, as he contemplates the sinner, rushing headlong down to ruin and death. This love for the souls of men is the basis of all missionary enterprise. When will physicians combine to plunge into the depths of the wilderness, to go to the wild and uncivilized parts of the earth that they may rescue men from physical disease? When will philosophers do the same, in order to impart knowledge? A desire to gain knowledge, curiosity, pleasure, ambition, or fondness for adventure may lead men of the world to such toil and privation, but only the child of God will take such sacrifice and labor upon him, that he may win the souls of men from sin, and allure them to the path to heaven.

How constantly is the principle of this beatitude illustrated in daily life! The merciful obtain mercy. Men reap what they sow. They get that which they give. Men do not pity the groans of Nero, or weep over the fate of Herod. Cursing comes back upon the head of him who utters it. The cruel and un-

forgiving have no right to expect mercy either from God or man. Sweetness is always conjoined with real goodness. Sour piety is a contradiction in terms. True faith always bears its appropriate fruit. To clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to visit the sick, to comfort the afflicted, to forgive one's enemies, is a very important part of true christianity. Cold and false, hypocritical and vain, is any profession of religion that does not include these things.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory :

And before him shall be gathered all nations : and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats :

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world :

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in :

Naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me :

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed *thee* ? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink ?

When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in ? or naked, and clothed *thee* ?

Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee ?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels :

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink :

I was a stranger, and ye took me not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we an hungered, or a thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee ?

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.

CHAPTER VII.

The Pure in Heart.

Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God. Math. v. VIII.

The idea of purity was deeply imbedded in the Jewish mind : but it was to the most only a ceremonial purity. They made clean the outside of the cup and platter, garnished and whitened the sepulchres of the dead. Of heart purity they had but the faintest idea. It was a peculiarity of Christ's teachings, that they struck down beneath all outward form and show, reaching to the very subsoil of the heart and conscience. To him, the outward act was a small affair, compared with the inner and hidden motive of the heart : the letter mattered but little, the spirit was everything. Hence the form of this beatitude.

The heart is the fountain, if that be pure, the whole current of thought and feeling will be clean. On the other hand, from a corrupt and depraved heart, nothing good or pure can proceed. A polluted and bitter fountain cannot send forth clear and sweet waters. Man looks at the outward appearance but God looks upon the heart. We may deceive our fellowmen, but the eye of God looks down through all show and sham, upon the secret springs of thought and motive. To his unerring vision, Moses in exile, Daniel in the lion's den, Paul and

Silas in prison, Cranmer burning at the stake, Bunyan in Bedford jail ; are nobler characters than kings and queens upon their thrones.

Purity of heart may consist with great defects in conduct, with errors of judgment and imperfections of knowledge. Our conduct is governed by our judgment, our judgment is based upon our knowledge, and our knowledge is of necessity finite and imperfect.

Scripture history furnishes us with many proofs of this. The heart of John was all aglow with love and purity, when he fell down to worship at the feet of the angel that showed to him the heavenly glory. But he received a gentle rebuke. *"And he said unto me, see thou do it not : I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus : worship God."*

That God looks upon the heart, and judges us by the motives from which we act, is a great comfort to God's people. How often the world misjudges us. The friends of Job thought that his afflictions came as a judgment and punishment for his sins : but God knew his servant better, and bore witness to his integrity.

Men of the world are only too glad to find defects and blemishes in the lives of Christians, and seize with eagerness upon the slightest pretext for pointing the finger of scorn. Happily for the believer, he is not to be judged by man's judgment, but by one who looks upon the heart.

The pure in heart are pronounced blessed because they shall see God. Yet we read again that God has not been seen at any time, that no man can see God. We cannot see God with mortal eye, he has not material body or parts that we may behold : but spiritually

we can see God, can feel his presence, can in some feeble measure comprehend his character and glory. The pure in heart realize the abiding presence of God. In him, they live move and have their being. They feel surrounded by his presence and glory, as the bird is surrounded by the atmosphere or the fish by water. They see God in nature. The heavens declare to them his glory, and the firmament showeth his handy work. The expanding flower, the singing bird, the fleecy cloud, the sun shining in his strength, the starry heavens, all alike speak to the pure in heart of God's goodness and power. Through nature they can look up and see nature's God.

The pure in heart see God in his word. To the carnal and worldly, it is a sealed book. They may admire its literary beauties, but into its hidden depths of spiritual meaning, they cannot enter. They may see a few nuggets lying upon the surface, but the pure in heart wander through mines of endless wealth. From the sacred pages of this book, they hear the voice of God; in its holy teachings, they trace the mind and will of God and from its inspired utterances, they learn to enter into the thoughts and plans of God. To them every sentence and line, from the opening declaration of Genesis, to the closing benediction of Revelation, is instinct with the light and life of God.

The pure in heart see God in the events of every day life, in the unfolding of human history, and in the joys and sorrows of their own experience. They know that the very hairs of their heads are numbered, that for them all things, even the ills and sorrows of life shall work together for good.

They can trace the hand of God in little things, as well as in great. They have learned not to despise the day of small things. God speaks to them in the events of every hour, in all the details of every-day life. They walk with God. Their lives are hid with Christ in God. They *abide* under the shadow of the Almighty.

They shall at last see God in heaven. They shall behold his glory in the temple above. They shall look with eye undimmed upon the full-orbed glory of the heavenly world. Theirs are the joys and triumphs of eternity. They shall walk with God in white, for they are worthy. Oh! blessed company of the pure in heart. It were better to walk and fellowship with them, than with kings and princes. They *are* the real kings of earth, yea, the kings of heaven also, for they shall live and reign with Christ forever. The pure in heart are not confined to any age, race or creed. We find them in every age, even the darkest.

God has had his chosen ones in the very midnight of the church's history. Noah feared and served God, amid a perverse and ungodly generation. Enoch walked with God, way back in the early dawn of history when the earth was yet wet with the morning dews of creation. Elijah was faithful though the nation had apostatized, and feared not to brave the wrath of a wicked King. During the thick darkness of the middle ages, there were some who saw the true light and walked with God.

There have been saints in every age. Fenelon, Pascal and Masillon, were eminent examples of piety, though like lamps in a sepulchre they only served to reveal the surrounding corruption and gloom. They were like

those flowers that grow up from the bosom of a dead and decaying tree. "God is no respecter of persons : but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." In the light of such an affirmation as this, who shall say that even in heathen ages and in heathen lands, may not be found some, who living up to the light received, have aspired after fellowship with God, and are entitled to a place among the pure in heart ? The pure in heart are often almost unknown to the world, and even to the church. They court not the glare and glamour of public favor or popular applause. The hot sun of publicity and prosperity, has a withering influence upon tender flowers and delicate perfumes. These prefer the shady nook, the cool and quiet retreat. The pure in heart can rest satisfied in God. If he smiles they care not who frowns. If he approves, it matters little who condemns. His presence transforms the prison or jail, until it seems a very palace of light and beauty. John Bunyan, a prisoner in Bedford jail, in spirit walked upon the shining hills of Beulahland, and held wrapt converse with saints and angels.

Daniel spent a pleasant night in the lions den, and Paul and Silas sang the praises of God, in the damp depths of a dungeon.

All who will may enjoy this rich blessing. It does not require wealth, power or influence. God's grace is as free as the sunshine. Still there are necessary conditions. We cannot have both Christ and the world, God and Mammon. The one excludes the other. They cannot mix or even abide in the same heart. If we want God in all his fullness we must let go all

allurements of sin, and all the follies of the world. If we do this, the power and the blessing will come, and we shall see God.

Surely such a sight will repay any sacrifice ; for God is the fountain of all truth, the origin of all life.

The pure in heart increase and grow in purity and power. Their pathway is onward and upward, shining more and more into the perfect day.

They grow under a very simple law. They behold the glory of God, and by its reflection are changed into the same glory. The light shines back upon them and daily beholding God they become daily more like God. Beautifully has the Apostle stated this great principle.

"But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." We very naturally become in thought and feeling like those with whom we intimately associate. If we walk and talk with God, we become like God. To become like God, is to attain the very highest good. There is no limit to our growth and development in this direction.

We can never measure up to the infinite fullness of God. There will always rise up before us higher altitudes to scale. Like a certain line in the higher mathematics, we shall always tend toward, yet never reach the point of rest. But whether toiling and suffering on earth, panting on the bed of death, or rejoicing amid the glories of heaven, we shall be blessed.

This divine blessedness no earthly calamity can take from us.

A peace and happiness that is subjective, springing

up from within, does not depend upon the world. Worldly bliss is objective, comes from without, is easily destroyed. The child of God has blessedness within him. The divine peace is within, a well of water springing up into everlasting life. How can that man be otherwise than blest, who carries within his own heart, the fountain of perennial peace ?

He needs not to go forth in eager search for happiness. Happiness has come to him. How constant and feverish is the pursuit of happiness among men of the world !

Some seek for it in the laurels of fame, others amid the gay bowers of pleasure, and still others search for it in the gray halls of learning.

The pure in heart find their joy in God. Hence their peace flows like a river, their joy abides in the deepest night.

“Joy is a fruit that will not grow in nature’s barren soil :

All we can boast tell Christ we know is vanity and toil ;

But where the Lord has planted grace and made his glories known,

There fruits of heavenly joy and peace are found, and there alone.”

CHAPTER VIII.

The Peace-Makers.

“Blessed are the peace-makers : for they shall be called the children of God.” Math. v. ix.

“All things that speak of heaven speak of peace.”
—BAILEY.

The gospel of Christ is a gospel of peace. Peace on earth, was the burden of the angelic song, that rang out under the star-lit skies, and over the plains of Bethlehem. Christ brings peace to the individual soul, and if his gospel were universally received, it would bring peace to all the nations and tribes of earth. No man can be a true follower of Christ, if the law of love and peace does not reign in his heart.

Love toward God, hatred and anger toward men, cannot abide in the same heart.

The same fountain cannot at the same time send forth sweet waters and bitter. By a very natural law, the peace-possessor becomes a peace-maker. The law of love and peace beams from his eye, distills from his lips, breaths in all his thoughts, purifies and ennoble all his utterances.

Such an one is indeed blessed, subjectively blessed. The possession of such peace is in itself a blessing. How much better is calm than storm, rest than tumult, the quiet of love than the rage of hate. He becomes a

blessing to others. Love and peace tend to reproduce themselves. He is especially blessed in thus showing that he is a child of God. He shows forth the image of his heavenly Father. He bears the family likeness.

The peace here spoken of is real peace—not the sham and semblance of peace, growing out of compromise with wrong, union between light and darkness, the kingdom of truth and the kingdom of sin.

Christ himself the Prince of Peace, was opposed, rejected and slain by the powers of darkness. His disciples were hated and persecuted.

So has it been all along the ages. The pathway of the true church has been marked by tears and blood, illuminated by the fires of martyrdom, and made narrow and thorny by the malice and hatred of a godless world. As it was in the beginning of the church's history, and ever has been along the line of her march down the ages, so it is to-day.

The church is no longer opposed by fire and sword, but the old enmity is there. This "vile world" is still no "friend to grace" to help the christian on to God. Even yet, down in the closing years of this boasted nineteenth century, the world goes in one direction, the christian in another. So will it be to the end of time.

Yet Christ *is* the Prince of Peace. His gospel is a message of love and rest.

His disciples are peace-makers. His church is the light and hope of the world. When truth and evil come in conflict, the fault is not with the truth. Ahab was the troubler of Israel, not Elijah. We cannot blame the light, because it drives away the darkness. If our hearts are not in harmony and sympathy with Christ,

it is only so much the worse for us. If we love darkness rather than light it is simply because our deeds are evil.

We must have first purity, then peace. As light follows darkness, as the rainbow beams upon the pathway of the storm, as smiles of joy succeed to tears of sorrow so does true and lasting peace follow the conflict between truth and error. We glance down the stream of human history, and we see a thousand illustrations of this great principal. In the lives and labors of the Apostles, in the sufferings and death of the martyrs, in the toils and persecutions of Wesley, in fact, in the history of truth for nearly six thousand years, we see that conflict must come before purity and peace. It is even so in the human soul, in the great crisis of its history, when the transition is made from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. We have the pangs of penitence, the sorrow of conviction, and afterward the joys of pardon and the rest of faith. It is by the same principle that we have the pilgrimage of earth, and afterward the bliss and glory of heaven. Pain before pleasure, labor before rest, battle before victory, darkness before light, tears before smiles, conflict before peace.

The great peace-makers have been men inured to conflict with the powers of sin and darkness. The privileges we enjoy in peace, our freedom from bigotry and oppression, our light and knowledge, were secured to us by conflicts waged before we were born.

Then let no man think that to be a peace-maker means to be a coward. It means the very highest style of manhood. It means a clear intellect, a

brave heart, a patient spirit. What are the bloody conquerors of history compared with these men and women of God. It is one thing to contend merely for glory and mastery, it is quite another thing to contend for purity and peace.

“No peace was ever won from fate by subterfuge or agreement; no peace is ever in store for any of us, but that which we shall win by victory over shame or sin—victory over the sin that oppresses us as well as that which corrupts.”

RUSKIN.

To secure such a victory, to acquire such peace of heart and life, is certainly to become blessed. But this is not all. The peace-maker has not only a subjective blessedness, but becomes a child of God; is seen and known to be such. The light of such a life cannot be hid. Even the world sees it, and recognize its power and beauty. “Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.” Earth has no such honor as this: to be a child of God. What is royal ancestry compared with it?

The children of God are happy. All things, including pain, sickness, poverty, bereavement, and all that the world counts evil, work together for their good.

The children of God are secure. No harm can come to them. The promises of God cover all the disasters of life, and throw a halo of glory over the darkest cloud. God’s saints sing songs in the night. His beloved sleep amid storm and trial. The children of God are the heirs of God. This is both law and logic. “If children, then heirs.” Their inheritance is beyond the reach of storm and flood, of flame and pain.

It is an inheritance, "incorruptible and undefiled." Then the children of God are rich. All the treasures of God are theirs. Poor they may be to worldly eyes, but they have treasure of which the half has not been told. The peculiar blessing of the peace-makers is this. They so manifestly show forth the spirit of God, that they are known and recognized as the children of God. Even unholy men feel the power of a saintly life, and in their hearts respect the grace and virtue that they do not care to imitate. How few of the professed disciples of Christ possess this spirit in any marked degree! The pages of Church History are filled with the record of strife and contention.

How many contend for party and sect and fail to see that the glory of a denomination is one thing, and the glory of Christ another? How many christians will or resent an insult or injury just as quickly as men of the world?

Herein is the church shorn of her power. Baptized with the spirit of her Master, she would move on to glorious victories.

We learn from the form of all these beatitudes that christians are already blessed. Each is in the present tense. "Blessed are." We need not wait for a blessing until we reach our heavenly state. We are blessed here. Our *full* reward is to be hereafter, but here, we have heaven begun. Men go to the Indies and to the Western plains, for gold and riches, but here are pearls of benediction, glowing in all the riches of eternity, free to all; yet are they passed by and neglected for the dust of earth and time. The gold, the pearls, the jewels of earth will all melt down in the flames of the

last day, but these gems of blessing will emit their radiance through all the ages of eternity.

Men sell eternity for time, heaven for a mess of pottage. The world has its heroes. Mostly are they men of war and carnage. Their pathway to fame is marked by burning villages, sacked cities and fields soaked in blood.

But the heroes of God, the glorious company of peace-makers shall live and reign forever. Even the world itself shall at last see things in their right light.

The peace-makers shall be called the children of God, and the meek "shall inherit the earth." Soon will come the appointed time for the manifestation of the sons of God. Then shall God's hidden ones arise and shine with all the glory of eternity.

Then shall men "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." It may seem to our poor and fainting hearts that God is "slack concerning his promise"—but his truth stands sure, and his word cannot fail. The night is far spent, and the morning light already begins to dawn.

Courage, fainting soul, the promised day is near.

"O it is hard to work for God,
 To rise and take his part
 Upon this battle-field of earth,
 And not sometimes lose heart !
 He hides himself so wondrously,
 As though there were no God ;
 He is least seen when all the powers
 Of ill are most abroad.
 Or he deserts us in the hour
 The fight is all but lost ;

And seems to leave us to ourselves
Just when we need him most.

It is not so, but so it looks ;
And we lose courage then ;
And doubts will come if God hath kept
His promises to men.

But right is right, since God is God ;
And right the day must win ;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin."

FREDERICK W. FABER.

CHAPTER IX.

The Persecuted.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Math. v. XI., XII.

The last beatitude is reserved for the persecuted. It was given to cheer the suffering saints of God in every age.

For weary centuries the enemies of Christ made war upon the church with fire and sword. All of the Apostles died a martyr's death. Many thousands of God's holiest ones have died upon the rock, expired in smoke and flame at the stake, or worn their lives away in loathsome dungeons.

"They lived unknown 'till persecution dragged them into fame,
And chased them up to heaven. Their ashes flew
No marble tells us whither. With their names
No bard embalms and sanctifies his song ;
And history, so warm on meaner themes,
Is cold on this. She execrates, indeed,
The tyranny that doomed them to the fire ;
But gives the glorious sufferers little praise,"

But their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and they shall be crowned with everlasting glory at the coming of the Lord.

The foes of Christ no longer resort to flame and

rack in order to oppose his church. The spirit of the age does not permit this, for freedom is the watchword among all nations. But the world on this account has lost none of its old hatred of the truth. The hatred, the old enmity is still there ; only it manifests itself in another way. There are two reasons why christians are not persecuted as in former days. One reason is that the world lacks the power. It is not possible to renew the old days. The spirit of christianity has broken the sword, quenched the fire, and diffused light and liberty among the nations. The other reason is a sad, but we believe true one. The vast majority of christians do not in these last days live so as to provoke persecution. If the church has gone out into the world, it is also time that the world has come up into the church. The church has had a vast influence upon the world, but alas ! the world has had no small influence upon the church. If the church of Christ lived and walked in the holy light of God, and bore her constant testimony against the sins and follies of a godless world, the old tiger of hate and persecution would be aroused. But in many places the church has thrown her patronage and protection over the dance, the play-house, the card-table, the race-course, all, all the follies and vanities of the world. Such churches and such christians will never be persecuted, but upon them will fall the woe pronounced by our Saviour upon those of whom all men speak well. If we have the friendship of the world, we must be at enmity with God. We cannot serve the two masters. Like the Israelites of old, we are called upon to choose whom we will serve.

But in this age, as in every age. God has a seed to serve him. In every place, in every church there are a few that have kept their garments unspotted from the world. These are often the subjects of persecution, not as in old times, physical persecution and bodily injury. There are other forms of torture than these. The cold sneer, the curling lip, social ostracism, these to a tender and delicate nature are as hard to bear as flame and rack. But, note in order to receive and enjoy this benediction, the persecution must be for Christ's sake. If our follies and inconsistencies bring down upon us the scorn or sneer of men, we have no claim upon our Saviour's promise. It is a special promise, pronounced upon special fidelity. When the persecution and the reviling comes upon us, because we stand faithful to Jesus, then indeed can we rejoice in our Lord's sweet smile of blessing. Happy they who bear the cross of suffering, that they may wear the crown of glory.

In this, we follow on in the footsteps of our Lord. The suffering comes first, and the glory afterward. Calvary before Olivet. The cross before the crown. But the battle once fought will never be fought again. The toils and tears, the conflicts and storms are transient, the rest and peace, the joy and rapture will be eternal. One who knew full well, the meaning of sorrow and pain, of persecution and adversity has written :

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ;" and again : "I reckon, that the suffering of this present time are not worthy to be compared with

the glory which shall be revealed in us." The rest will be all the sweeter, because of earthly toil. Present suffering will only enhance the future glory. Looking back upon the pathway of the pilgrim church, we find it reddened by the blood of unnumbered martyrs. They constitute a glorious army. Some, like Polycarp, were burnt at the stake, others were devoured by wild beasts, their blood mingling with the sands of the arena, some were torn to pieces upon the rack, and others were more quickly slain by the sword. It may be that ere the present dispensation closes, these scenes of persecution will be renewed. It would only be in analogy with the past history of the church. In all probability, it would be short sharp and bloody, the last conflict between good and evil the light and the darkness. God and truth must prevail.

But in the heavenly glory those who have suffered the most for Jesus here will shine the brightest.

The blood-drops shed for Jesus, shall be trans-mounted into rubies of fadeless beauty, flashing forth their glory from the martyrs crown of life. The fire kindled by the red hand of persecution, shall become a halo of glory, for the brow of the enthroned and triumphant saint.

Upon the noble army of martyrs rests the choicest benediction of our Lord, the brightest and best in this string of pearls.

Our task is completed. For a little season, we have sat at the feet of Jesus, and caught the sweet accents, and listened to the inspiring words of the Prince of teachers. As we go forth from this mount of beatitudes, down into the valley of life's daily work

and trial, let us take with us the holy and calming influences of the sacred spot. It is our privilege ever to abide in the sunlight of these benedictions.

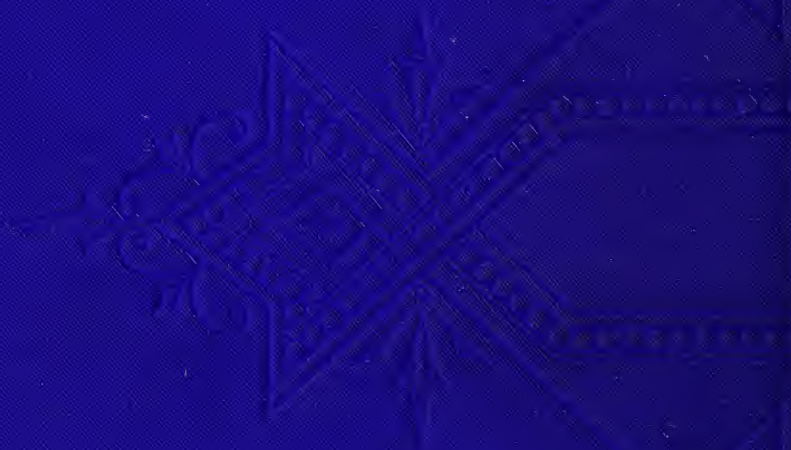
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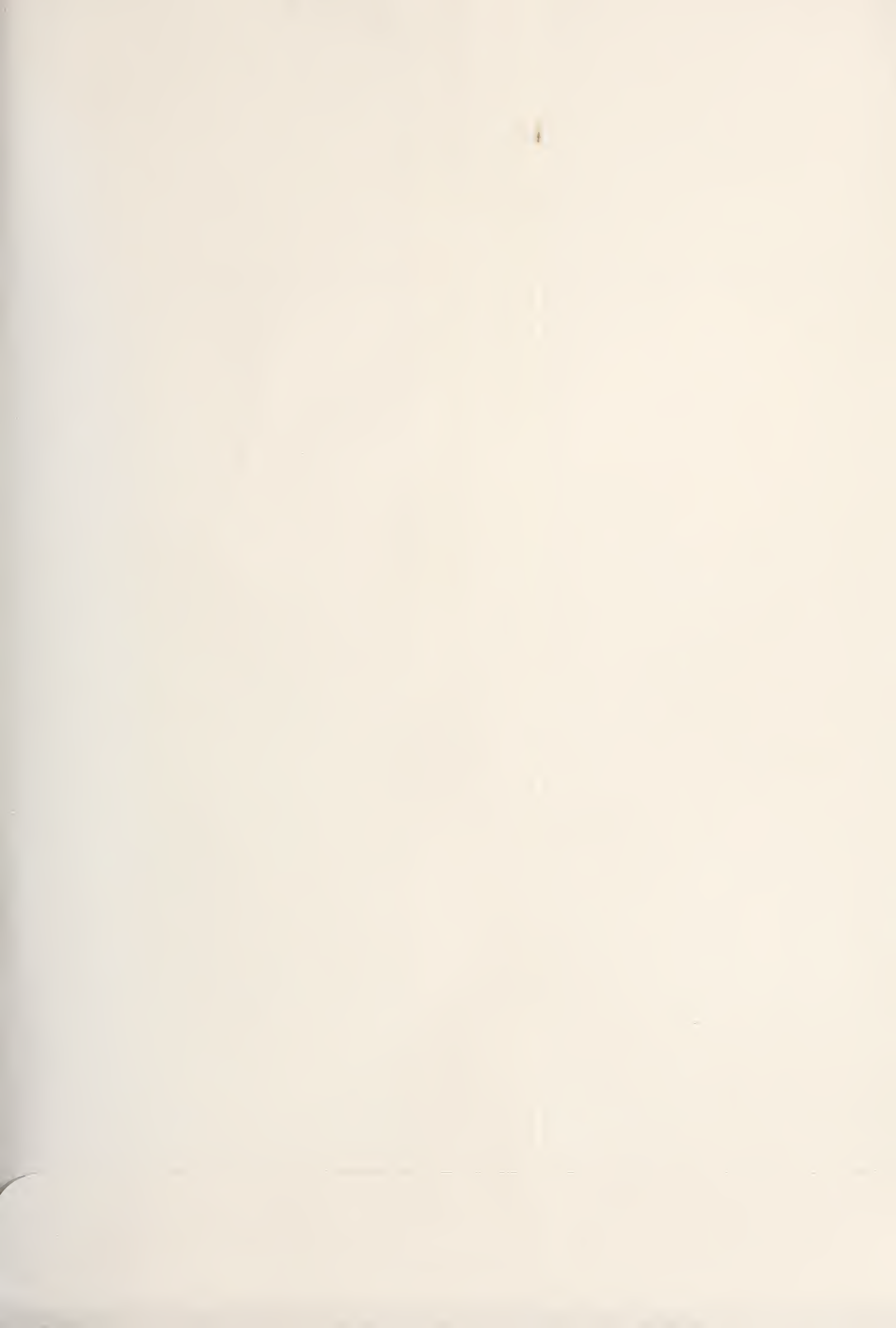


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